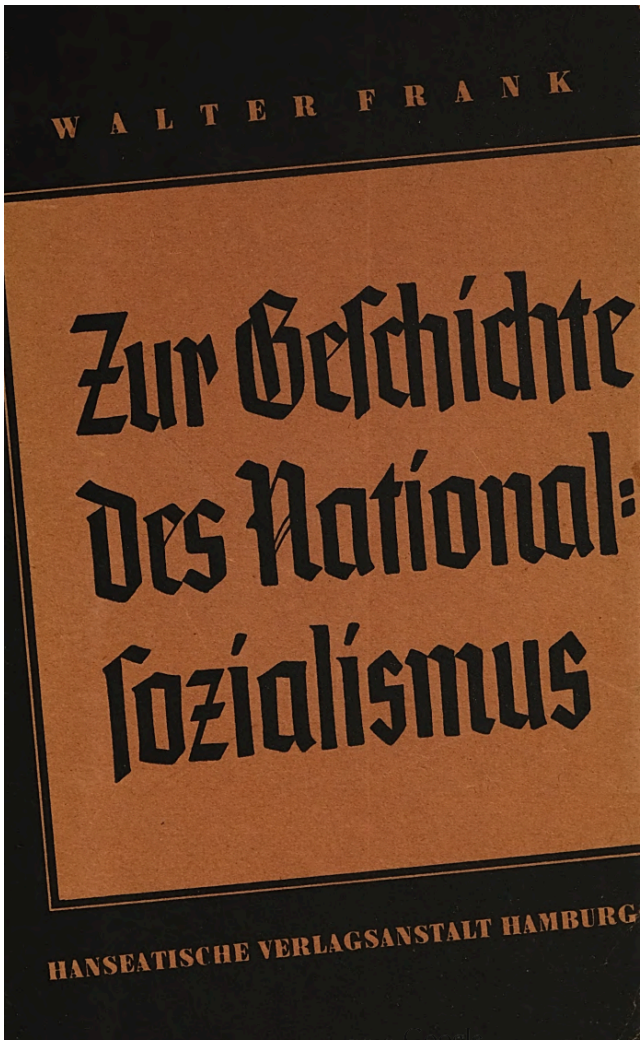
On the History of National Socialism
by Walter Frank



Seventh Edition

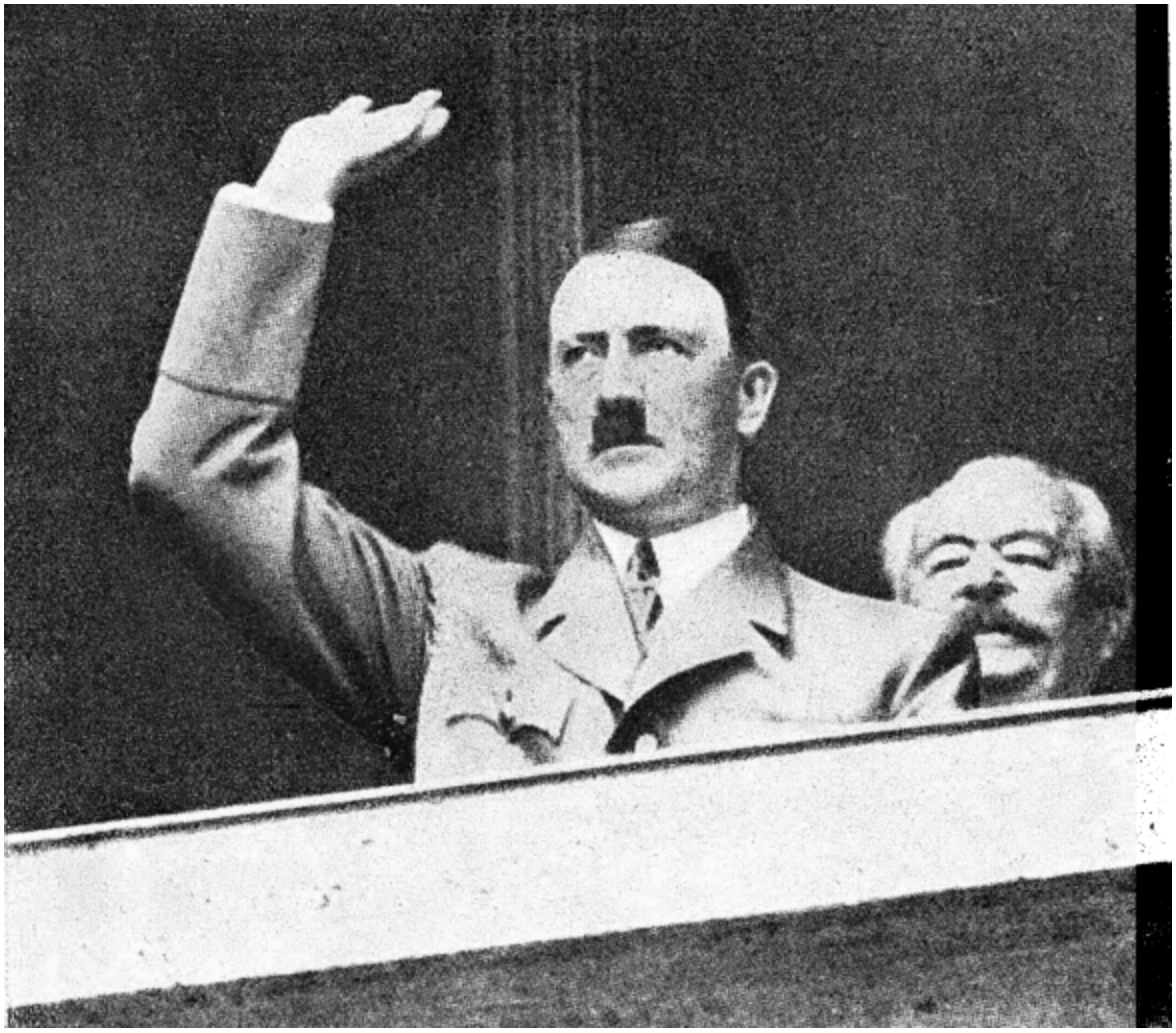
Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, Hamburg
1943

Lecture delivered at the University of Munich

“The NSDAP has no objections to the publication of this work; the work is listed in the National Socialist bibliography.”

- The Chairman of the Party’s Official Review Commission for the Protection of National Socialist Literature
Berlin, March 7th, 1939

Printed by Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt Aktiengesellschaft, Hamburg-Wandsbek
Copyright 1934/1943 by Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt A.-G., Hamburg 36.
Printed in Germany



The Führer at the window of the Reich Chancellery on July 2nd, 1934; behind him, General Karl Litzmann

Forward

This lecture was delivered on June 14th at the University of Munich; I am publishing it in the form in which it was delivered.

It goes without saying that such a lecture cannot exhaust the entire subject of “The History of National Socialism”, and that today it can be nothing more than an “attempt” - nevertheless, I believe that such a serious attempt at “passionate understanding” is an urgent necessity, especially today.

The second year of the National Socialist government is undoubtedly more favorable for ourselves than the first, for the year 1933 belonged to the unfolding of the revolution, and its breakneck pace initially pushed any retrospective reflection into the background; the literature of that year therefore served largely to glorify this victory rather than to provide a deeper explanation of the momentous events.

The intellectual and spiritual poverty of either honest conviction or dishonest ideological speculation naturally celebrated its triumphs in this context; all leading statesmen of the new Reich immediately and clearly recognized their dubiousness and danger, while among the public, they could only run their course after a certain time - it seems that the moment of this running its course has arrived today.

We stand at the hour when Adolf Hitler has established the iron law of the new Reich and the will for a revolution of creative reconstruction over the entire German people; with this consolidation of the Reich, the necessity has also arose to grasp the broad outlines of its becoming and being more deeply and seriously - from the literary chaos of the transitional period, the will toward a serious intellectual penetration and artistic shaping of the National Socialist experience can and must now rise.

My lecture is addressed to those who have been waiting for this will toward intellectual seriousness.

Berlin, July 2nd, 1934

Forward to the Fourth Edition

Like the previous editions, this fourth edition appears unchanged; here, however, a small but valuable addition to the account given in this work regarding the tragedy at the Feldherrnhalle should be noted - it was provided to me by a participant, Captain Streck, and confirmed by General Ludendorff.
In a written account, Captain Streck describes how, on November 9th, 1923, following the police volley that dispersed the National Socialist marching column, he hurried after General Ludendorff, whom he could see ahead of him, asking: “Are you wounded, Your Excellency?” General Ludendorff’s reply was: “No, I regret that I did not fall!”

Precisely today, when the contradictions of that hour have long since dissolved into a higher unity, when the two figures of the Führer Adolf Hitler and the commander Erich Ludendorff have once again come together in our national consciousness in the unity in which history must always see them, this historical memory will strangely shake and move us. It may also offer a comforting lesson: it shows how, precisely for the passionate will of the genius, the hour of the heaviest defeat may suggest the desire to lie buried beneath the ruins of the cause that has seemingly been struck down forever, and how, yet, for this extraordinary man, no bullet has been cast toward him until he has completed the predestined course of his mission.

It was Adolf Hitler who spoke of the “wonderful necessity of these connections” in his speech at Tannenberg at the grave of Field Marshal von Hindenburg - it is to this that this historian, who has witnessed the rise of the new Germany with a passionate heart—from that terrible hour at the Feldherrnhalle in November 1923 to the present day—will also bow his head time and again.

Walter Frank
Berlin, May 8th, 1937

I.

My comrades!
When the German Student Union in Munich asked me to speak on this evening's topic, I first had to ask myself a fundamental question: is it possible today, in 1934, and to what extent is it possible, to speak about the history of National Socialism?

In 1933, National Socialism moved from the era of the struggle for power into the era of government, and in doing so, it fundamentally changed the nature of its struggle - yet, it is and remains a work in progress. We ourselves are all, in some form and to some degree, part of this process, which today has become the very essence of our people's development, and those of us who have stood within the movement's becoming for many years can say of the decade that must today be addressed as the "history of National Socialism" what the great historian of our Second Reich, Heinrich von Treitschke, said in his "Deutschen Geschichte" (German History): that this era speaks of suffering and happiness that was experienced firsthand - to you, the history of this decade will tell of your own love and your own hatred, of your own despair and your own hope, of your own struggles, your own defeats, and your own victory…
Perhaps, then, the academics of the past era will object that it is impossible, in fact, to have a history of National Socialism today, that these years are still too much a matter of passion for us to become an object of insight - we do not for a moment fail to recognize that, from a purely factual standpoint, future generations will be able to gain insights into the past decade that are still closed to us today; nevertheless, we wish to contradict that academic, for we deny that passion and insight must necessarily be opposites. We wish to understand the historian as a charioteer who must tame two steeds of royal passion: one steed is named Struggle, the other, Truth. Struggle and Truth are both siblings, and like all siblings, they can bite one another and thereby, in this case, cause the chariot to overturn - that, then, is precisely the task of the historian: to steer them toward the same goal.
Only he who stands in the midst of becoming will truly bring the past to life; only he who does not close himself off from the great laws of the past will understand the process of becoming in its entirety - in this spirit, we wish to undertake the attempt to capture the broad outlines of the history of National Socialism in the years between 1919 and 1933; we wish to combine the passion with which we experienced that time of struggle with the analysis of pure understanding that the researcher and the artist apply to a subject in retrospect - in this way, we wish to arrive at a passionate understanding of this history.

Just how much passionate personal experience can aid understanding may already become clear to us in the very first question posed by the history of National Socialism: the question of the origins of the National Socialist movement.
When the National Socialist revolution triumphed last year, those who had hitherto been merely superior, smiling onlookers suddenly flocked into the fold of the NSDAP; by that, I mean the intellectuals, and by "intellectuals", we mean the opposite of those who create intellectually: those who create intellectually produce values, and the intellectuals define the values produced by others; it is also usually the case that these intellectuals accompany the struggle for these values with their pitying irony, yet celebrate its victory with great fanfare as their own victory.
These intellectuals, at that time, had sneered at National Socialism during the harsh years of its struggle for power and despised it as "unintellectual" and "utopian"; in March 1933 however, they were suddenly

there, acting as if they had always been there, and magnanimously declared themselves willing to provide the “intellectual foundation” for National Socialism...
Today their literature piles up like mountains; one finds everything in it, even true spirit. However, only one thing is truly missing: the main point, namely, the fundamental fact that at the beginning and at the center of National Socialist history stands one man: Adolf Hitler.

Different eras have developed very different theories regarding the role of the individual in history, but for the most part, these theories were derived from the practical experience of those eras - in the age of Otto von Bismarck, Heinrich von Treitschke’s view of history—that men make history—took root; in the era of Wilhelm II, however, a literary herald of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Privy Councilor Ruedorffer-Riezier, put forward the theory that in world politics, it is not the brilliant individual who decides, but “in the end, the better average”; finally, in the era of the Weimar Republic, where it was no longer the better, but mostly the worst average that ruled, a democratic historian, Johannes Ziekursch, believed he could demonstrate only one thing from Bismarck’s history: that even the greatest of men had to succumb to the masses, the spirit of the times, and liberal democracy...
Of course, there have been times—and there will likely be times again—when the average has determined history; however, throughout the ages, the clock of world history has repeatedly swung back to strike that great blow that heralds the eras of creation and genius - we were privileged to grow into such an age, and Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany have once again proven that German maxim which Mussolini inscribed beneath his portrait for a German writer: that men make history.
This is not to say that a personality, even the greatest, can accomplish anything that cannot grow according to the will of Providence and the laws of time; the great man merely fulfills, very often in struggle with the majority of his contemporaries, the deepest longing of his time.
But there are also times that cry out for a “savior,” yet whose longing sinks into blood and tears because their “savior” is denied to them - such was the case in France in the 1880s. I still remember a lecture I heard as a student nearly ten years ago here in the Auditorium Maximum of the University of Munich; I was sitting up there on the gallery of the lecture hall at the time, and from the spot where I now stand, a liberal historian, who was highly regarded at the time, spoke about recent French history: the scholar compared—not directly, that was not his style, but very clearly indirectly—Adolf Hitler with General Boulanger; incidentally, I can also note that this same scholar has since brought himself to make another comparison: last fall, he compared Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler—again, not directly, for that is not his style, but very clearly indirectly—to Oliver Cromwell.
In any case: if Adolf Hitler had truly been comparable to that wretched French general, the yearning, struggle, and fighting of our German postwar era would have ultimately have been in vain; only when the yearning and fighting of that time found the man who, in Goethe’s words, summoned the arms of the gods through his refusal to bow—only that has brought the fulfillment of the age…

When many have said that National Socialist lines of thought existed even before and independently of Adolf Hitler, that is correct - but that is not the decisive point; rather, what is decisive is that the National Socialist idea, as it has become the shaping principle of our people today, was only possible and can only be understood through the personal development of Adolf Hitler.
Adolf Hitler himself described this development with masterful clarity in his book “Mein Kampf”; there one sees how all the fundamental ideas of his later struggle took shape in their embryonic form in German-Austria during the pre-war period.

German nationalism in those Austrian borderlands was anti-Habsburg; this meant that, unlike the patriotism of the German motherland at the time, it was not bound to a dynasty. The nationalism proclaimed by the Austrian Pan-Germanism of Baron von Schönerer was essentially völkisch: for him, the people took precedence over the state. But while the Pan-German movement remained bourgeois and parliamentary, and turned a blind eye to the abyss of the social question, the young Adolf Hitler was thoroughly acquainted with this social question through his own life experiences - he was the son of a minor civil servant and wanted to become an artist, a painter, or an architect, but material hardship forced him down into the broad working masses; thus he became a wanderer between two social worlds. Despite this, he did not become a Social Democrat, but instead recognized how little these masses could be won over by the methods of old bourgeois nationalism; in the movement unleashed at the time by Vienna's great mayor, Dr. Karl Lueger, he became acquainted with a movement that sought to wrest these masses away from Social Democracy using Christian-social and antisemitic slogans.
Of course, it would be wrong to already view Adolf Hitler of the pre-war period as a politician, for at this time, Hitler was an artist who combined an Austrian sensibility with a passion for the German Reich - thus, in 1912, he arrived in Munich, the southern German capital and city of art, which became his second home. When the Great War came, he marched into the field with a Bavarian regiment; during those four years, he became fully integrated into the German Reich, and also during those four years, the imaginative artistry of the Austrian merged with the toughness and discipline that the German army instilled in the Germans of the Bismarckian Reich.
As an anonymous soldier among millions who performed their duty in silent obedience, Adolf Hitler fought in the war; it was not until November 10th, 1918—the day on which, as a victim of gas blindness in the military hospital in Pasewalk, he witnessed the collapse of the Second German Reich—that his life received its decisive impetus - from that day on, the feeling of his political mission dawned upon Corporal Adolf Hitler.

In March 1919, he arrived in Munich, initially as a non-commissioned officer in the German Reichswehr. This post-revolutionary Munich was a German battleground - here the Red Revolution had reached its ultimate extreme in that Council Republic, where the synagogue, the sanatorium, and the prison established a brief but unforgettable reign of terror; however, it was also here that the pendulum of development swung furthest to the right.
From the Munich May Days of 1919, when Leviné, Landauer, and Egelhofer fell under the gunfire of the "White Guards," a new Bavaria emerged; it found its embodiment in the force that grew out of Colonel von Epp's Ohrdruf Freikorps, in the police force reorganized by Poehner, in the self-defense associations led by Escherich, and then, a year later, following the Berlin Kapp Putsch, in the government of a conservative civil servant who, at the time, seemed to the down-to-earth population to be the savior from anarchy: Gustav von Kahr.
In the shadow of this political system, under the protection of Police President Poehner and his colleague Dr. Frick, everything that had declared war on the Weimar Republic organized itself as early as 1920: the failed North German putschists, such as Ehrhardt and Bauer, General Ludendorff, and Adolf Hitler with his National Socialist German Workers' Party.
Adolf Hitler had joined this party as its seventh member in 1919; formally speaking, therefore, he is not its founder, but in truth, he is its creator - before his arrival, the NSDAP was a completely insignificant organization, but under his leadership, it grew slowly but steadily between 1920 and 1923.

Through the experiences of the Great War and the Revolution, the fundamental insights Adolf Hitler had gained during his time in Austria had matured: as a front-line soldier, he had witnessed how the old ruling class of Imperial Germany had succumbed so helplessly to the enemy—both externally and internally—precisely because it no longer understood the psychology of the broad masses; thus, for Adolf Hitler, who knew the soul of the people, the resolve grew to create a new nationalism that must be grounded in the broad masses, for true nationalism could only achieve this if it understood the social needs and demands of the people and took upon itself the social renewal of society in the spirit of National Socialism.
Parliamentary democracy and its masters—international capital, Marxism, and Judaism—were thus to be unseated using their own weapons: mass propaganda. Yet the NSDAP never for a moment accepted the fundamental principle of democracy for itself - as Hitler put it in "Mein Kampf":

"World history is made by minorities when the majority of will and decisiveness is embodied in this numerical minority."

Thus, from the very beginning, the NSDAP was something entirely different from the other parties of that time - the NSDAP was a party of revolution, and its goal could be achieved only through total victory, through the total overthrow of the Weimar democracy and the total rule of the movement in a new state. Hitler testified in 1924 before the court:

"It is perhaps peculiar that a man who, for over four and a half years, learned to respect his superiors, to never contradict them, and to submit blindly to them, should suddenly find himself in the greatest contradiction that can exist in a state—a contradiction with the constitution.
...if the fallen were to rise again and be asked whether they would accept the existing state of affairs, they would cry out: 'Never!'"

In this sentence, the deepest driving force of Adolf Hitler's political struggle is expressed: in Hitler, the front-line soldier of the Great War became, for the first time, a conscious and purposeful revolutionary; in Hitler, the political executor arose on behalf of the millions of dead in the graves of this World War.

The National Socialist revolution was originally pursued, in the years between 1919 and 1922, through the methods of mass conquest by propaganda - then came the year 1923, and with the change in Germany's overall political situation, the political tactics of the NSDAP also changed.
In the spring of 1923, the French marched into the Ruhr region, and from this a great wave of nationalism swept through Germany. A struggle for freedom against the invaders seemed possible; thus, it came to pass that, alongside the official army, the Reichswehr, the national defense associations now also rose to power. The NSDAP did as well; by aligning itself with them, they transformed the SA from a political propaganda force—which it had been until then and would later become again—into a military force.
The entire situation seemed to demand a swift resolution, and in Adolf Hitler's view, the prerequisite for a struggle for freedom was the overthrow of the Weimar Republic; it no longer seemed necessary to fight for this overthrow gradually through a numerical majority since the path to a swift, armed seizure of power now seemed to open up. The prerequisite for this, of course, was that the official military, the Reichswehr, would make itself an instrument of the national revolution - and the decisive factor in Adolf Hitler's political calculation was to be General Ludendorff.

Around Ludendorff, the great commander of the World War, the task was first to rally those military associations that were of a revolutionary disposition; in the height of summer 1923, at the German Day in Nuremberg, the NSDAP, the Bund Oberland, and the Reichsflagge united to form a "German Combat League" under Ludendorff's military command and Hitler's sole political leadership.
The name Ludendorff was then also intended to draw the Reichswehr over to their side; they believed they could count on the Bavarian troops for the "March on Berlin," which they openly proclaimed. As for the North German troops, it was presumably believed that they would behave toward General Ludendorff just as those French regiments had who were supposed to arrest Napoleon upon his return from Elba and who, when he asked, "Do you wish to arrest your emperor?" replied with the cry: "Long live the emperor!"
Faced with the revolutionary resolve of the combat units, the Knilling government in Bavaria backed down in the fall of 1923 and countered with a name that enjoyed greater prestige among the Bavarian people than the parliamentarians of the Bavarian People's Party - the Knilling cabinet handed over all executive power in Bavaria to former Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr.

We are not speaking here of the individual events of that autumn of 1923; we are merely seeking the innermost driving forces and connections of that tragedy...
Once before, in the years of 1920–21, Mr. von Kahr had been a decisive figure in Bavaria, and the self-defense units had brought him to power after the Kapp Putsch; at first he pursued their policies, but he then yielded to the pressure of the parliamentarians and sacrificed the People's Defense Corps; soon after, he himself was sacrificed by the parliamentarians.
Nevertheless, Kahr's moral standing among the Bavarian people remained unbroken in 1923, for far beyond Bavaria, Kahr was seen at the time as the savior statesman of the bourgeois right, the "Bismarck of the South" - after the witch's sabbath of the Council era, after the rule of the Jews and the red mob, this man seemed to the down-to-earth people to embody in his person the old bourgeois order of the monarchical state.
Mr. von Kahr could have been Prime Minister in the calm pre-war era; now, in that era, he was thrust into the turbulent times of revolution and counterrevolution, and the hopes of the masses, as well as the calculations of the parliamentarians, transformed him from what he was—a capable administrative official—into what he was not, but what the country longed for: a leader. At that time, the broad masses of the national population were still seeking their leaders among the elderly, dignified dignitaries of the old, monarchical system; it had not yet occurred to these national masses to see in Adolf Hitler, this corporal who had become a tribune, "the Führer"...
From this situation, from the tension between the claim to leadership of the dignitaries and the claim to leadership of the private, arose November 8th, 1923.
Both groups—Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer, as well as Hitler and Ludendorff—wanted the overthrow of the Weimar Republic, but the Kahr group proceeded from the notion that "corporal", Hitler, had to subordinate himself as a "drummer" to their superior leadership; Hitler, on the other hand, felt that these dignitaries were not at all leaders with a superior political will, but merely bourgeois pragmatists who, by a stroke of ill fortune, had suddenly been placed near the fuse at the powder keg of a great revolutionary decision.
These officials and officers, accustomed to obedience to the law, recoiled time and time again before the fuse was lit; this was because they felt that they themselves, from whom the people expected leadership, needed guidance, because they themselves were waiting for the authoritative command that would relieve

them of their own responsibility - it was then that this “corporal” resolved to impose himself on the dignitaries as their Führer.
That evening, in the adjoining room of the Bürgerbräukeller, the decisive psychological process was not that these three men—Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer—were able to be swept along by Adolf Hitler, but that Hitler was only able to draw them into his plans through the intermediaries of General Ludendorff and then the King[1]:
“If this is to be a show of confidence for Your Excellency, then so be it…,” said General von Lossow to General Ludendorff after a long hesitation; Colonel von Seißer then stepped forward and shook Ludendorff’s hand.
“I cannot do this without the King’s consent,” Kahr protested.
“Your Excellency,” Poehner told him, “as royal officials, we must not stand behind the King; we must stand before the King.”
At that, Kahr relented: “I assume the regency in the King’s name.”
The fears these officers and officials felt about taking the leap into illegality, they did not sacrifice to the “corporal’s” claim to leadership; instead, they temporarily sacrificed them to the authority of the imperial commander and the authority of the king.
This implies two things: that the three men were by no means, as they later claimed, putting on a show, and that they had to break away as soon as they were physically removed from the “corporal’s” demonic spell.
There is no doubt that the three men at the Bürgerbräukeller were swept up by these events; when they then returned to their offices however, the worm of humiliation gnawed at their souls: that they, the dignitaries, had been led out of the hall by a “corporal” at gunpoint and treated as his puppets; that they had been thrust into the uprising against the law by a man who felt a higher law of his own within his breast—but who was of no authority to them…
When Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer returned to their offices, the law had already gone into effect - the troops had been alerted to the coup.
The three men then caved in for the second time that night: at 2:30 a.m., they sent out a radio message stating that their consent had been coerced by force and was therefore null and void...
“Shoot the rebels!” General von Lossow shouted in senseless rage on the night of November 8th–9th. The phrase sums up the situation - by fleeing the revolutionary responsibility into which Hitler had sought to force them, Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer had retreated back into the safety of legal regulations.
November 9th, 1923, revealed that the dignitaries of the old monarchical system were incapable of the leadership they claimed, and that this “corporal,” who carried the new law in his soul, was not yet the final authority; the other, terrible fact—that the soldiers of the revolution fell under the bullets of the soldiers of order—was merely the consequence.

***

On November 9th, the procession led by Hitler and Ludendorff set out from the Bürgerbräukeller and made its way through the streets of Munich.
At the Ludwigsbrücke, it encountered a police cordon for the first time; the officers then readied their weapons: “Halt! Ludendorff and Hitler are here!” - at that, they stepped aside to the right and left.

[1] Though royal authority under Ludwig III had been abolished in 1918, many leading dignitaries were still monarchists at heart and believed that they still represented the royal office, even under democracy. - The Translator

On Residenzstraße there was another line of sentries: “Heil! Don’t shoot! You’re not going to shoot at Ludendorff, are you?” - once again, the line broke apart.
Then the procession reached the Feldherrnhalle.
From the Theatinerkirche, a group of state police advanced at a rapid pace, while the rear ranks of the procession and the crowd, which enthusiastically accompanied the march, did not notice; instead they continued singing: “O Deutschland hoch in Ehren...!”
Adolf Hitler’s personal aide, Ulrich Graf, saw the rifles raised and aimed right at him; he leaped in front of Hitler, pointed his hand at Ludendorff, and shouted: “Here is Ludendorff! Do you really want to shoot your own general?”
At that very moment, a shot rang out, and, gravely wounded, Graf collapsed; behind him, Adolf Hitler was dragged to the ground by Dr. Scheubner-Richter, who also collapsed dead. Further to the right, Captain Göring, severely wounded, dragged himself toward the Bavarian lion at the Residenzapotheke - there, with his gaze fixed straight ahead, General Ludendorff could be seen walking through the line of fire...

II.

A decade later, on New Year’s Day 1934, Chancellor Adolf Hitler wrote a letter to Prussian Prime Minister Hermann Göring; in it, he reflected on November 1923 and said:

“It was a harsh necessity that compelled us to act, and wise foresight that denied us success at that time.”

A profound statement and a deep insight, for today we can see clearly: had the attempt of November 9th, 1923 succeeded, it would have been less a National Socialist revolution than a national coup d’état; it was only the catastrophe of 1923 that forced the National Socialist movement to sink its roots so deeply into the German soil that it could weather the fiercest storms.

In the turbulent year of 1923, Adolf Hitler had sought to create the Reich of his dreams in a single stroke by using Mussolini’s method of a “March on Rome.”
Although at that time the head of the German Wehrmacht was Ebert and Hitler’s ally was General Ludendorff, the discipline of the troops had not been shaken by the national revolution; this experience and this realization became decisive for Adolf Hitler’s second period of struggle.
In 1925, Field Marshal von Hindenburg became President of the Republic - with the imperial soldier at its head, who in his person represented the experience of the Great War for the broad masses of the people, the Weimar democracy gained the support of a moral authority for the first time; with that, however, the last possibility of overthrowing the Weimar state by force, illegally, also vanished; the only option left now was to overcome it legally. The great question of the second phase of the National Socialist movement was thus: whether it was possible to destroy democracy using democratic methods.
In itself, it was conceivable that a party which had practiced the methods of mass democracy for a decade might also have succumbed internally to mass hysteria; if that did not happen, then it was a consequence of the Führer principle embodied in Adolf Hitler.
The populist allows himself to be led by the masses; meanwhile, Hitler led the masses and forged them into a people - just as his nationalism was meant to liberate the idea of the fatherland from the suffocating

grip of bourgeois caste prejudice, so his socialism was meant to lift the striving for social advancement out of the depths of proletarian envy. Jewish Marxism and its logical extension, Bolshevism, sought to use the masses to destroy every elite, every form of prosperity, and every culture, to achieve the universal leveling of all life; Adolf Hitler, on the other hand, showed the working masses the path upward - the poorest among the people, he said in his Braunschweig speech in the fall of 1931, could be a candidate for the nobility of the nation.
Thus, according to Adolf Hitler's will, the National Socialist movement was to be a great school of education - from the depths of the national soul, it was to internally overcome the spirit of democracy and international uprooting, while the outer walls of the democratic system still stood; from the depths of the national soul, without any material power, solely through the power of a brilliant personality and the idea, it was to create the new state.
For years, opponents spoke scornfully or fearfully of a "state within a state"; in truth, however, the Weimar Republic was no state at all, because it lacked sovereignty externally and the guiding, nation-shaping idea internally - that is why the state had to grow anew, from the bottom up, from the people.

Long before Adolf Hitler became Chancellor, he had been the great founder of our people's new state in the 20th century - that day, January 30th, 1933, was merely the day when the secret state that this man had created over many years became an open state; when a people's sovereignty, which had grown out of its own strength, found official recognition for its legitimacy.
We see this great line of development today, but let us be careful, in the face of this seemingly straight parade route, not to forget that it was paved through long years of struggle, hardship, and sacrifice; that the graves of hundreds of people lie along its edges, and that every stone that supports this road is cemented with the hot blood of human beings...
When the National Socialist revolution had triumphed, the intellectuals we spoke of at the outset demonstrated that this was bound to happen because it lay in the course of development dictated by nature - in truth, it was because they themselves lack character, these people who wish to argue the character out of all of history; they wish to make us forget that at the center of all history stands the will, the will that decides, the will that believes, the will that fights, the will that sacrifices, the will that stands just as upright over the marching battalions or the silent graves of the SA as it does over the lonely study of the poets and thinkers to whom the secret state gave the inner mission to create their works...
The story of Adolf Hitler and his movement is one of the great rebukes that world history delivers to the clever ones; it teaches that a great creation is never the calculable work of mere cleverness, but rather a gift that fate bestows upon the mission that is given power through a demonic will.

***

When Adolf Hitler returned from Landsberg Fortress in December 1924, he stood before a heap of rubble - from this new beginning, the Reich grew.
The struggle of the National Socialist movement from its re-founding to its seizure of power can be divided into three major periods - the first period, between its re-founding and September 14th, 1930, is the period of internal growth; the second phase, from the September elections to Bruning's fall in May 1932, encompasses the decisive struggle between the NSDAP and the parliamentary state; the third

period, from the summer of 1932 to January 1933, is marked by National Socialism's confrontation with the old imperial conservatism.

The first stage of the movement is lacking in major dramatic events, but is rich in quiet work: in the years between 1925 and 1929, the party first rebuilt its organization, and then its agitation began to spread - in 1923, it was essentially confined to Bavaria, but now, for the first time, it became geographically what it had always been ideologically: a German party.
From all German regions, walks of life, and generations, National Socialism drew new forces, and it forged them into a new type of human being - for me personally, I have perhaps never again felt this unifying power so vividly as at the 1929 Party Congress in Nuremberg, where I saw General von Epp and Dr. Joseph Goebbels sitting side by side at the leaders' table; this thirty-two year-old tribune, who was just then beginning to conquer Berlin and make his name hated and feared by his opponents—and the sixty-one year-old famous soldier, who with a young heart had placed his name at the disposal of the reviled movement - the younger man, a leader of the urban masses; the older man, a leader of the soldiers. Around Joseph Goebbels swirled something like the machine-like hammering of the factories and the muffled march of the masses through which, somewhere in Wedding or Neukölln, his car drove; to Franz von Epp, it was something like the scent of the forest he loved as a hunter, like the singing of the rattling royal standard under which he had led his personal regiment into battle, or like the hard marching step of the "White Guards" on the streets of Munich...
Ten paces from the two men, in the center of the grandstand, one could see the man sitting there to whom the unification of these opposites into a higher unity had been granted—the tamer of German anarchy—Adolf Hitler.
In May 1928, the NSDAP entered the Reichstag with twelve representatives, a splinter group still completely insignificant politically; despite this, a year later, in the fall of 1929, it intervened for the first time on a broad front in Germany's domestic political struggle.
Together with the German National Party, which under the leadership of Privy Councilor Hugenberg had taken a fierce stance against the Weimar democracy, and Seldte's "Stahlhelm," the NSDAP sought to prevent the adoption of the Young Plan through a referendum.
This referendum failed; it received only 13.8% of all votes, but nevertheless, it was not without a favorable effect for the NSDAP since, for the first time, the party had declared its opposition before all of Germany and before Europe; for the first time, it forced the Weimar democracy onto the political defensive.
In 1930, under the influence of the policy of fulfillment and the economic crisis, the influx of the masses into the party began; in that year, the party established within the SA an instrument of power of rare strength and precision, and also in that year, in the person of Dr. Frick, it undertook the first bold and dangerous attempt to demonstrate its ability to govern by participating in a coalition government in Weimar; this surge took place at a time when the crisis of parliamentarism in Germany had entered a decisive stage.
In the spring of 1930, the Reich President tasked the Brüning Cabinet with resolving the financial crisis, and he did so with the explicit declaration that it was not to be one of the usual parliamentary coalition cabinets, but rather a cabinet of his special trust and with special powers - of course, despite this, the Brüning Cabinet was nonetheless a cabinet of the bourgeois center, predominantly dominated by the Center Party—that is, a cabinet of parliamentarians.

But with the Brüning Cabinet, the parliamentarians had to admit for the first time the impossibility of overcoming the crisis by purely parliamentary means, and they now had to resort to the extraordinary powers of the Reich President; they also had to remember to secure the support of another extra-parliamentary force—the bayonets of the Reichswehr—which General von Schleicher believed he could command as the secret power behind the throne.

Dr. Heinrich Brüning, Germany's last parliamentary chancellor, was hailed as the finest exponent of parliamentarianism - in that, he likely was. But perhaps it was telling of this political system that its very finest exponent remained inwardly alien to the people and their passions; as a cool-headed calculator of the corridors of power, he knew nothing—or at least too little—about the fundamental events unfolding or brewing down there in the depths of the national soul - thus, Brüning miscalculated National Socialism, and he saw in it nothing more than a radical wave that would quickly rush past.

His very first, decisive act of government was explained by this underestimation of National Socialism: he dissolved the Reichstag, which had rejected his emergency decrees, because his goal was to crush the opposition Hugenberg Party and have them replaced by the People's Conservative Party, as a right-wing group loyal to the government; Brüning was counting on a victory for Treviranus.

And so, September 14th, 1930, arrived - when 107 National Socialists entered the German parliament as representatives of 6.5 million voters, the Weimar Republic—and indeed the entire public opinion of Europe—felt, for a moment, as if a volcano had opened up beneath their feet.

Once the initial shock of this electoral victory had subsided and the NSDAP was now engaged in the grueling trench warfare of parliamentarianism, the view was occasionally expressed that Adolf Hitler had missed his great opportunity on the night of September 14th–15th—the chance to march on Berlin—and would now end up like General Boulanger after that historic January 27th, 1889, in Paris. But Adolf Hitler saw more clearly; he did not repeat the gamble of 1923, but instead, with his oath of allegiance to the law in the Leipzig Reichswehr trial, embarked on the long and arduous path of the democratic struggle.

"We will show that we can also fence with a foil,"[2] Hitler declared the day after the election - that sentence now defined the situation; the NSDAP had now moved from the stage of pure agitation and organization into the stage of parliamentary and diplomatic struggle for power.

This struggle was more difficult for National Socialism than for any other party, for those other parties, which were parliamentary in nature, were based on compromise; their goal was the strongest possible share of power, and none of these parties dared to identify with the entire people and therefore demand total power - the NSDAP also made this claim, but it's true goal had always been to gain total power; even in the sheep's clothing of parliamentarianism, it remained the revolutionary wolf.

Any participation in government could be for it only a stage, and the legal method it now employed had to remind the suspicious parliamentarians of the Trojan Horse: peacefully it stood in the field until it was pushed into the walls of the city of Troy, only for armed men to then emerge from its belly and pounce murderously on the horrified Trojans.

To escape such a fate, the parliamentarians united under a sort of dictatorship led by Chancellor Brüning - the Social Democrats bowed to the emergency decree policy of the Center Party chancellor and, in return, secured their position of power in Prussia. The tactic of this governing bloc against National Socialism was a strategy of attrition; Brüning wanted to keep Hitler out of any government participation until such participation would be safe, and National Socialism, therefore, had to be kept waiting at the gates of

---

[2] A foil is a sword used in fencing that has a flat tip; Hitler is saying that his party can still fight even with the handicap of a parliamentary democracy. - The Translator

power until it slipped from its leader's grasp and ran into the machine guns of the Reichswehr—or until the National Socialist tide began to ebb - in either case, the day had to come when the parliamentary Delilah could cut the revolutionary Samson's shaggy hair and then let the blinded giant turn her Philistine mills…

That is the fundamental domestic political problem of the year 1931, and the immense task that this year presented to Adolf Hitler was this: to force a massive mass movement into the gray routine of political trench warfare, and yet ensure that on the day when the trumpet call summoned the great storm once more, the resounding "Here!" of revolutionary zeal would ring out.
More than once, there was a danger that this repeatedly restrained revolutionary fervor would rise up against the Führer; this was seen most dangerously in that spring of 1931, when in Weimar the fall of Frick seemed to refute the coalition policy of the party leadership, and when in Berlin Captain Stennes sought to incite the impatient SA against the "parliamentary half-measures" of the Munich headquarters.
In this period following September 14th, 1930, Adolf Hitler demonstrated his statesmanship before the whole world: during this time, the great tribune of 1923, the great organizer and party leader of the years 1925–1930, proved himself in the arena of high politics; additionally, he also had to be a diplomat on the floor of the Hotel Kaiserhof and in the political game of chess with General von Schleicher, while also remaining the prophet of the revolution in the hearts of his SA and the faithful masses - as a wise Frenchman in 1933, Ambassador François-Poncet, puts it:

"Hitler is a man who hears voices; however, he also knows how to hear other voices that do not come from Heaven. Whenever I had dealings with him, I found him moderate and wise; that is not surprising, for realism and mysticism have always made a good combination - all in all, for us French, that is hardly reassuring!"

The year 1931 ended in a "draw" for both Hitler and Brüning: Hitler had not seized power, but Brüning had not defeated National Socialism either - then came the presidential election.
Like no other election, that presidential election was the NSDAP's great opportunity, for all other elections were decided for the NSDAP only by an absolute majority—and the party did not secure an absolute majority until 1933, when it already held power - in the popular vote of the presidential election, a simple majority tipped the scales between two figures.
If the NSDAP won the presidency, its president would have control over the Wehrmacht, the dissolution of the Reichstag, and the appointment of a new Reich government; the presidential election could thus be the legal conquest of total power, the "legal march on Berlin."
At that moment, it became clear how the internal situation of the Weimar democracy had developed under the pressure of the National Socialist movement: in the face of the referendum, the ruling democracy could no longer present the voting public with a candidate from its own ranks; thus, any parliamentary candidate that ran against Adolf Hitler was hopeless.
After a long struggle of intrigue, the parliamentarians succeeded in persuading the incumbent Reich President von Hindenburg to run for a second term, placing the venerable white head of the Field Marshal between themselves and the onslaught of the National Socialist movement.
Hindenburg's candidacy in 1932 was the moral declaration of bankruptcy of the Weimar Republic; however, at first, it was also its material salvation - the name Hindenburg not only brought the voters of the Grand Coalition to the Brüning Front, but also appealed to those broad masses of the apolitical,

patriotic middle class who represented the lingering remnants of the old subjection: in terms of numbers, these subjects were the deciding factor. Their bourgeois instinct told them that a revolution was being proposed to them in a legal form, that they were being asked to vote in a plebiscite for a former corporal against a field marshal and president - and so, they voted against the revolution.
When, on the night of March 13th–14th, the news broke that Field Marshal von Hindenburg had triumphed with nineteen million votes over Hitler's eleven million, SA men in many guardhouses laid their heads on the table and wept with rage and despair…

***

The legal "March on Berlin" had failed, and in the days that followed, a poster by the Black Front[3] appeared on Berlin's billboards, depicting Adolf Hitler as Napoleon on his return from Moscow - beneath it read: "The Great Army is destroyed; His Majesty the Emperor is well."
At that moment, the fate of the National Socialist movement once again hung in the balance, and the goal that Theodor Wolff had set forth in the "Berliner Tageblatt" at the time—that in the second round of the presidential election, the NSDAP's vote share must be slashed from eleven million to at least seven million—was by no means utopian - nothing is more successful than success. For the first time on this day, the seemingly unstoppable triumphant march that the NSDAP had been on since the September elections was brought to a halt; this standstill could easily have turned into a setback.
Adolf Hitler himself described March 13th, 1932, as the Kunersdorf[4] of National Socialism - but this Kunersdorf had also found its Great Frederick.

One of Hitler's long-standing maxims was that the masses always follow strength; in that March of 1932, strength seemed for a moment to lie with the opponent, only for Hitler to throw into the balance the one force he alone possessed: the magic of the great personality.
Even on the night of the defeat, he called on the movement to fight for a second round of voting, and thirty days later, he was flying across Germany; wherever he appeared, he roused the masses and transformed desperate crowds into an army ready for battle.
The second round of voting took place on April 10th, where Hindenburg won half a million votes and Hitler won two million - the heavy moral defeat of March 13th had turned into a moral victory.
The strategic goal, however—the presidency—had been missed, as Chancellor Brüning seemed firmly entrenched in power. But hubris, which usually precedes the fall, overtook the chancellor, and under pressure from the now-overconfident left, he prompted the Reich President to ban the SA.
That was a mistake; with this brutal concession to the left, Brüning undermined the narrow foundation of his power, making it difficult for the right wing of his parliamentary supporters to continue covering for his policies in the Reichstag - in essence, he had turned the Reichswehr against him, and he gave the influential men behind the scenes, who were waiting for his downfall, the opportunity to launch the decisive blow against him; a month and a half later, after the Prussian elections had shaken the fragile support for the Brüning cabinet, General von Schleicher led this offensive, and on May 30th, 1932, Heinrich Brüning was dismissed by the Reich President.

---

[3] A sub-group of the NSDAP formed by Otto Strasser in 1930 after a split in the party, which leaned more towards anti-capitalism and was anti-Hitler. - The Translator
[4] The Battle of Kundesdorf was the only battle in which Frederick the Great lost catastrophically, leaving him with 3k men out of his original 50k strong army. - The Translator

Immediately thereafter, the President appointed a “Cabinet of National Concentration,” with von Papen as Chancellor and von Schleicher as Minister of the Reichswehr; the ban on the SA was lifted, official suppression of the NSDAP ceased, and the Reichstag was dissolved. Meanwhile, in July 1932, the last remnants of Red power in Prussia were eliminated through an intervention by the Reich - without a fight, the Social Democratic police chiefs Severing, Greszinski, and Weiß yielded to a Reichswehr officer and a few men...

The Weimar coalition, which two months earlier had believed its power was secured by Hindenburg’s election, was unceremoniously ousted overnight by this president it had elected.

The Papen Cabinet had been formed without any connection to Parliament, instead resting on the personal favor of the Reich President and on the power of the Reichswehr; almost all of its members belonged to that aristocratic association, the “Herrenklub,” which for years had been gathering a conservative “elite” and preparing it to take over the government - with the Papen Cabinet, the conservative ruling class of old imperial Germany had returned to power overnight.

The decisive domestic policy issue for this government was the same as for Brüning: its stance toward the NSDAP. The way it sought to resolve this problem, however, was different, for the contrast between National Socialism and this conservatism had never been as stark as that between National Socialism and Weimar democracy.

Nationalism and anti-parliamentarianism united Papen and Hitler, and thus, the Papen cabinet was initially able to maintain the role of a benevolent patron toward the National Socialist movement; nevertheless, the conflict was inevitable from the moment the Papen government contested the NSDAP’s and Hitler’s claim to leadership - that Adolf Hitler maintained this claim to leadership even now was not merely a party-political necessity, but a necessity of world history.

The regime of the old imperial ruling class had, viewed as a whole, already been defeated and condemned by November 1918; now, in 1932, to demean the National Socialist movement to such a regime as a subordinate element would have meant nothing less than burying National Socialism in the shortest possible time under a new wave of red mass fury - it was against this backdrop that August 13th, 1932 arrived, on which Hitler rejected the vice-chancellorship and, in vain, demanded the chancellorship for himself.

With this 13th of August, the most dangerous phase for the NSDAP began in a year already replete with struggles and defeats, for this struggle of the fall of 1932 had to be waged not only with weary troops and empty campaign coffers, but above all waged in a situation as unfavorable as could be imagined: to be fighting on two fronts - for ten years, National Socialism had directed its forces against the parties of the Weimar coalition, often fighting in alliance with conservatism; now it had to lead these forces against an authoritarian, anti-parliamentary, nationalist cabinet and defend a joint parliamentary base with the Center Party...

On November 6th, 1932, the NSDAP lost two million votes in the Reichstag elections; in this situation—defeated in the election campaign, rejected by the president, powerless in parliament and financially exhausted—it now had to parry the attack of the man who emerged from the November 1932 crisis as Papen’s successor: Chancellor von Schleicher.

For years, this shrewd, cool-headed diplomat had been a secret powerbroker in German politics, and the success of his scheming—which made and unmade ministers—had convinced him that he was a statesman - in spite of this however, his brief and inglorious public role served only as a faithful historical demonstration that mastery of intrigue is not yet synonymous with mastery of politics.

Nevertheless, this chancellor, when he was in power, was perhaps the most dangerous foe for the NSDAP, for he countered it with the authority of the Reichswehr; along with this, he employed a tactic that no opponent of the NSDAP had used until then: party division.
We saw that Adolf Hitler described the presidential defeat of March 1932 as his Kunersdorf; of the weeks in December 1932 and early January 1933, when Gregor Strasser negotiated his entry as Vice Chancellor into the Schleicher cabinet, one can certainly say that they represented the camp of Bunzelwitz[5] for Hitler and the movement.
On the evening of January 30th, 1933, so the story goes, Hitler told a colleague:

"There have been two miracles in my life, and both were when I looked destruction straight in the eye: after the Munich Putsch, when I was imprisoned, isolated, defeated, and ridiculed, and on the eve of January 30th, when I seemed destined to fail, suffocated by intrigues, financial difficulties, and the weight of twelve million people swaying back and forth - both times, God saved me."

This statement brings us back to the words of Goethe that we placed at the beginning of this reflection and with which we sought to describe the role of the great man: few situations fit the phrase of "never bowing down," which summons the arms of the gods, better than this period in Adolf Hitler's struggle.
It was, of course, an intellectual, Hans Zehrer, who at the time in the "Tägliche Rundschau", Schleicher's organ, issued the slogan: Hitler had been the apostle of the National Socialist idea, whereas Gregor Strasser was the statesman who would now realize this idea in realpolitik - in truth, the conflict between Hitler and Strasser was yet another manifestation of the eternal struggle between greatness and false prudence.
To the prudence of normality, it must have seemed madness to turn down the vice-chancellorship and other ministerial posts in order to persistently wait for the moment of greatness; however, it was the wisdom of greatness that knew that National Socialism must either fight for leadership as a transition to total power—or perish; once this goal was recognized, it had to be fought for with blind faith and unyielding energy until the arms of the gods came to the rescue.

The decisive effort of will in this direction was the small but politically significant state election in Lippe on January 15th, 1933 - here, Hitler threw the entire force of the party behind this small district, and on January 15th, the NSDAP recorded a new increase in its vote share; the notion that its decline in votes was unsustainable had been refuted.
True, on the day after the election, Hans Zehrer wrote in the "Tägliche Rundschau" with an utterly smug irony: "Lippe-Detmold, a beautiful city—and within it, a single seat!" But on the same day, the "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" also reported, in the icy tone of a stock market report: "In informed circles, it is noted without prejudice that the chances of Gregor Strasser becoming Vice-Chancellor have dropped considerably."
Around the same time, Adolf Hitler made a daring but successful diplomatic move - in the Cologne talks, he formed an alliance with his former opponent, Mr. von Papen, against Chancellor Schleicher; by the end of January 1933, Papen's influence succeeded in persuading the Reich President to dismiss Schleicher and to negotiate with Hitler, and on January 30th, Hindenburg appointed the Hitler-Papen-Hugenberg cabinet.

[5] Bunzelwitz served as Frederick the Great's military camp during the Seven Years' War campaign, where he was outnumbered and heavily assaulted by Austrian and Russian forces. - The Translator

The jubilant crowds that paid homage to the elderly President and the new Chancellor on Wilhelmstraße that evening were well aware of the profound symbolic significance of that moment - after a long and ruinous conflict, the President—who, as a Field Marshal, had been the venerable embodiment of the Great War for the German people—had entrusted the leadership of the Reich to the man who had once served under him as a soldier and who had then, as the political executor of the German front, become the Führer of the future.
At that time, the people saw the secret political game that was being played less clearly; they could not and were not allowed to understand why, at the very moment when Adolf Hitler drove from the Imperial Court to the Reich Chancellery for the first time, his face—amidst the cheering crowds tearing down the police cordons—was pale with inner agitation and grim with a terrible effort of will. They could not and were not allowed to know what the Führer knew: that only now, in government, did the daring game for victory have to be played to the end and decided; while resistance rose against him from all sides from those who knew full well that his complete victory must mean their end, Adolf Hitler initially had at his disposal only the police power of his ministers Frick and Göring...
Then he succeeded in making the decisive move: the dissolution of the Reichstag; he called upon the people for help against his adversaries, and on March 5th, the NSDAP crossed the finish line with seventeen million votes - for the first time since the Reich's existence, the Center Party's key parliamentary position had been broken, and in southern Germany, the ground had been pulled out from under the rebellious governments; in every state, the National Socialist revolution unfolded spontaneously, rising from the people.

On March 21st, 1933, the new Reich was consecrated by tradition in the Garrison Church in Potsdam; at the tomb of Frederick the Great, Reich President von Hindenburg designated Hitler's government as the government of his confidence, thereby legitimizing the National Socialist revolution; at the same tomb, Chancellor Hitler also paid homage to the aged Field Marshal, who had witnessed the events of 1866, 1870, 1914 and 1918, and had now become the godfather of this new Reich.
It must be rooted in the character of our German people that, in our history, all revolutions from below have failed, such as 1848, 1918 and, in the history of National Socialism, the coup of 1923 and the "legal march on Berlin" of March 1932; the National Socialist revolution triumphed only through an alliance between Hitler and Hindenburg, which may initially have been forced by the pressure of the political situation, but which then developed into a sincere relationship of trust in the alliance of tradition and creation.
Two days after the state ceremony in Potsdam, the legal abdication of the Weimar democracy took place at the Kroll Opera House - I would like to conclude this lecture by reading my diary entries about this historic session:

"Reichstag at the Kroll Opera House! It was no longer a parliament in the old sense, for half the chamber was in brown uniforms; President Göring presided over the session with military brevity; the auxiliary police of the SA and SS were at the walls and exits; the Center was silent and subdued; the Social Democrats were silent and in a constant—unfounded—fear of death; the galleries were almost entirely National Socialist, intervening with applause and disapproval against the Left, and the SA and SS were at the gates - behind the barriers, the people...
In some ways it was like the Convention during the French Revolution, except that everything proceeded without bloodshed, with the utmost order and discipline - a revolution of order...

6:15 a.m: ‘The floor is given to Representative Wels!’
The chairman of the Social Democrats... a mediocre philistine; he speaks in a plaintive voice, with the false pathos that all these old parliamentarians possess; no truly sharp attack because, you can sense it, the man is afraid. His plaintive, imploring voice would tell the psychologist: ‘I have to say my little speech, for, after all, I am the party leader - but I no longer believe in what I’m saying; just let me finish it quickly so the torment is over; I want to stay alive and go into hiding!’ - that is their ‘Führer’!
And the parliamentary group! At regular intervals, they say, as dull as a chorus of the dead: ‘Very true—very true!’; I cannot see their faces, but the sound of their voices says enough: even in this sea of ‘very true’s lies a pale fear; they must shout it, for they have been ordered to do so in the parliamentary group meeting...
Nothing is felt more quickly by a crowd than weakness; that is how it is for all the spectators in the gallery. From Wels’s very first words, people in the gallery laugh, not with hatred, and barely with contempt anymore, but amused, liberated; a laugh that grants those poor devils down there their pitiful, naked existence, and which at the same time kills them morally... the laughter is still quiet, sporadic, restrained, but then Wels reaches a climax, he raises his voice and commemorates the martyrs of social democracy...
Then a word breaks away from the gallery like a small stone, is picked up by others, and is then shouted aloud: ‘Braun! - Otto Braun!’
And behind the little stone, an avalanche rolls in: a terrible, roaring, all-sweeping laughter; it crashes over the gallery, the benches, surges around the lectern—and then it has buried the speaker beneath it.
Representative Wels was certainly not finished yet, but he suddenly took his manuscript and walked down the stairs; his face betrayed both a desire to weep and a mortal fear of the SA, both of which he sought to hide behind a mask of wounded innocence. And the hall laughs; the SA laughs, and the stands clap with delight.

Then suddenly there is Göring’s voice: ‘The floor is now open to the Reich Chancellor!’ And another avalanche now roars down; everyone stands, cheers, shouts - a hurricane.
The speech that followed was a cataclysmic event; Hitler toyed with Wels like a cat with a mouse, and he sent the brown side of the chamber into a raging fury, fists clenched toward the Social Democrats sitting crouched in their seats; then, in the very next moment, he once again exposed the Social Democrats to the curse of ridicule, and in the galleries, the visitors in the front rows leaned eagerly over the railing: they wanted to watch the Social Democrats as the blows rained down on them; they wanted to see them on the scaffold...
They themselves offered no serious opposition, though once, Wels asked to speak; in response, Göring said in the tone of a teacher, ‘You listen now!’, and everyone laughed; Wels tried again, and the response came: ‘Don’t interrupt me!’ Hitler ordered - and now the speaker is silent.
Amid tremendous cheering, the chancellor then leaves the floor.
Prelate Kaas[6] then comes forward, and his statement decides the fate of the Enabling Act; he reads more intelligently and with more dignity than Wels, but he, too, with the false pathos of a parliamentarian: ‘...the Center Party votes in favor of the law.’

[6] Ludwig Kaas, German Catholic priest and politician associated with the Center Party and generally associated with being instrumental in bringing about the Reichskonkordat on July 20th, 1933. - The Translator

Applause - with this monotonous sentence, an era ends, and the Reich Chancellor Hitler is entrusted with dictatorship for four years; parliamentarianism has abdicated.
A few minor speakers are heard, and once again, one sees the utter insignificance of these people that pass by; behind ringing reservations and admonitions, they seek to conceal their complete capitulation.
The vote; it all happens in a flash, and at 8 o'clock, the Reichstag is adjourned; in a few hours, a revolution has been legalized. The National Socialist faction and the gallery visitors stand up and sing the first verse of the Horst Wessel Song, and meanwhile, the parliamentarians shyly make their way out.
In the hallway, cheers can be heard from the street; there stand the SA and SS, with spectators behind them, and the Reich Chancellor appears on the balcony. We wait below; the SA reports that Brüning had wanted to leave the Kroll Opera House, but backed away when met with boos.
Suddenly, an indignant voice is heard: 'But where is the chauffeur for the presidential car?' - it is Vice President Esser of the Center Party, and his chauffeur is not there; perhaps he is waiting somewhere for Hitler; no one pays any attention to the white-haired president's indignation, and the scolding voice fades away again, like a faint echo of the Weimar system.
And then new cheers - the chancellor then drives off.
He stands in the car, visible from afar, and waves, in the coat he already wore when he spoke at the Krone Circus in Munich around 1923 - a 'fool' back then to all the intellectuals, and today, the Führer of Germany."